

SOLACE



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY OF SUBSTANCE USE
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS

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**+ FAMILIES AT THE HEART OF PREVENTION:
A COLLECTIVE CALL TO ACTION**

SPECIAL EDITION
THE 6TH ISSUP NIGERIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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SPECIAL EDITION: THE 6TH ISSUP NIGERIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

FAMILIES AT THE HEART OF PREVENTION: A COLLECTIVE CALL TO ACTION



Substance abuse remains one of the most pressing public health and societal challenges of our time. Its impact runs deep, affecting not just individuals but families, communities, and entire nations. Yet, in the midst of these challenges, families remain the cornerstone of hope—serving as the first line of defence and the final refuge in the fight against substance use and abuse.

The recently concluded 6th National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP) Nigeria Chapter, held on 16 October 2024, spotlighted this truth with precision and urgency. With the theme ***"Strengthening Family Support Systems for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery,"*** the conference was a powerful reminder that sustainable solutions to the substance use crisis must begin where all journeys do—within the family.



ISSUP Nigeria chapter members in a group photograph after the Annual General Meeting

At the heart of the conference was a call to action for families to take up their irreplaceable role as nurturers, protectors, and rehabilitators. The welcome address delivered by Dr. Martin O. Agwogie, National President of ISSUP Nigeria, painted a sobering picture of the challenges faced by families in Nigeria today. Economic hardships, absentee parenting, and the erosion of emotional connections have left many children and young adults vulnerable to substance use.

Dr. Agwogie's message was clear: families are both the first victims and the first solution to substance use. When parents become emotionally distant or neglectful—whether through absence or preoccupation—the void left in a child's life often becomes fertile ground for risky behaviours, including drug experimentation. Strong family systems, he argued, can act as a preventive shield, an early detection mechanism, and a critical support structure for recovery.



Dr. Martin Agwogie, President of ISSUP Nigeria, delivering his welcome address



From L-R: Hon. (Dr.) Blessing O. Nwagba, Dr. Olajumoke Koyejo, Dr. Ngozi Madubuike and Dr. Martin Agwogie

The conference was further elevated by the Keynote Address from Dr. Ngozi A. Madubuike, Deputy Commander General of Narcotics (DCGN) and Director Drug Demand Reduction, NDLEA. A seasoned professional with over three decades of experience, Dr. Madubuike emphasised the need for evidence-based, family-centred prevention strategies. She made an impassioned plea for collaboration, noting that no single entity—be it government, schools, or healthcare systems—can combat the substance use crisis alone.



Dr. Ngozi A. Madubuike delivering her keynote address

In addition to powerful speeches, the conference offered something often lacking in public discourse: data-driven solutions. Research presentations explored substance use patterns in prisons, rehabilitation centres, and communities, shining a light on alarming trends. For instance, a study on Yenagoa Correctional Centre revealed how unchecked access to substances within prison facilities worsens addiction issues among inmates, particularly young adults. Another comparative

study spanning 10 years at a rehabilitation centre in Jos documented rising trends in the use of alcohol, cocaine, and methamphetamines.

What these findings revealed is that prevention must start early and be sustained at every stage of life. It must also involve families, communities, and institutions working together to address the root causes of substance abuse—trauma, peer influence, economic hardship, and emotional neglect.

One of the conference's most profound moments came during the panel discussion, where experts emphasised the urgent need for:



Professor Emmanuel Abikoye (r), ISSUP Nigeria General Secretary moderating the panel discussion

- Early Intervention: Parents and caregivers must be equipped to detect and respond to early signs of substance use.
- Positive Parenting: Families must nurture emotional connections with children, creating safe spaces for trust and dialogue.
- Community Collaboration: Faith-based organisations, schools, healthcare providers, and policymakers must unite to reinforce prevention efforts.
- Policy Advocacy: Governments must prioritise family-centred prevention strategies through funding, policy reforms, and support systems.

The conference also recognised champions in substance use prevention, honouring individuals and organisations whose dedication to this cause has made a tangible impact. Partners like the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the NDLEA, Africa Union Commission, ECOWAS, ISSUP Global, International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) were commended for their steadfast support in advancing prevention and recovery efforts in Nigeria.



Ijeoma Opara, INL Representative



L-R: Dr. Olajumoke Koyejo, Dr. Martin Agwogie, and Rev. Father Ogaga during the award presentation

As the event drew to a close, one message resonated loud and clear: prevention is a shared responsibility. Families, while critical, cannot bear this burden alone. They need the support of communities, institutions, and governments to succeed. Prevention strategies must be holistic, evidence-based, and culturally relevant. Recovery programmes must be humane, accessible, and sustainable. Above all, society must treat substance use as a public health issue—not a moral failing.



Hon. Dr. Nwagba, Dr. Martin Agwogie, Ijeoma Opara and Dr. Olajumoke Koyejo

We must recognise that every individual struggling with substance use has a story, and every story is connected to a family. By strengthening family support systems, we are not just preventing substance use—we are rebuilding relationships, restoring hope, and securing the future of our communities.



ISSUP Nigeria members in a group photograph

The 6th ISSUP Nigeria National Conference was not merely an event; it was a rallying cry for change. It reminded us that solutions are within reach if we are willing to work together. Families are the bedrock of society. Strengthening them is not an option—it is a necessity.

As we reflect on the insights, stories, and solutions shared at this conference, we must move beyond words to action. Let us commit to empowering families with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to protect their children, heal broken relationships, and champion recovery.

By: Ejikeme McBishops Ogueji
[Head Editorial Team]

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NIGERIAN SOCIETY OF SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS (ISSUP) NIGERIA CHAPTER

Date: October 16, 2024

Venue: Lagos

Protocol,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the sixth national conference of the Nigerian Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP) Nigeria Chapter.

Since the establishment of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter, and in particular the past one year, we have remained committed to strengthening collaboration among stakeholders in psychoactive substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery in Nigeria. This is geared towards promoting evidence-based practices and contributing to policy development. All these would not have been made possible without the commitment of members who have remained focused on our desire for a better society devoid of the devastating consequences of the abuse of psychoactive substances. Our collective strength in collaborating with stakeholders and delivering tasks remains in the non-discriminatory membership of the association, which cuts across different fields of study, disciplines, and work settings.

At this conference, we shall be discussing topics relating to one of the critical components in psychoactive substance control, which is the family. Thus, the theme for this conference is **"Strengthening Family Support Systems for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery,"**. The focus on family at this conference is hinged on our knowledge in the field of psychoactive substance demand reduction and the understanding that everyone, setting, and particularly the family has a role to play in effective control of psychoactive substances.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, you will agree with me that the theme of this conference is coming at a good time when family settings in Nigeria are experiencing some form of crisis, which is either serving as risk factors for substance use or compromising treatment and recovery responses. For example, recent statistics show that married couples in Nigeria are increasingly drifting apart, thereby exposing their children to the risk of substance use. More parents have become absentee parents, paying little or no attention to the emotional needs of their children. In some cases, parents are preoccupied and fatigued by their struggles to eke out a living with little or no time and patience to take care of the needs of the children. There is limited bonding in many families, with little understanding of the growing child. Among some of the affluent, parenting has been reduced to the provision of clothing, cars, and attending the best of schools. As important as these may be, attending to the social and emotional needs of the child enhances the whole child development, thereby minimizing the risk of substance abuse.

The family is a central institution and cornerstone of a generation that must be protected as society reflects the pictures of the family units. As may be well known, parenting has become more challenging now than it was in the 70s and 80s. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to protect the family unit and evolve more positive parenting skills for a better society.

Here to discuss topics under the theme, we shall be listening to a lecture by one of our renowned experts in the field of drug demand reduction, followed by a discussion session and goodwill messages. We strongly believe that more positive parenting skills will help in addressing the problems of psychoactive substances in Nigeria. We also believe that at the end of the conference, we will all have a more positive perspective towards psychoactive substance control from the smallest unit of socialization, which is the family.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and members of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter, permit me to seize this opportunity to express appreciation to our local and international partners and sponsors, particularly the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), Nigeria office, and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for all the support.

And to everyone, I welcome you all to this conference.

Thank you.

Martin O. Agwogje, PhD, ICAP II

[National President ISSUP Nigeria Chapter]

**REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL DRUG
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NDLEA) BRIG. GEN. MOHAMED BUBA
MARWA (RTD), CON.**

***Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (rtd), CON
CCEO, NDLEA***

Distinguished guests, esteemed members of the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP) Nigeria Chapter, healthcare professionals, families, stakeholders, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of purpose that I address you at this year's Annual Conference of the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP) in Nigeria. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to ISSUP Nigeria for their unrelenting efforts in raising awareness and providing solutions to the menace of drug use in our society. Today, more than ever, we need collaborative efforts to address the complexities and challenges associated with drug use prevention, treatment, and care.

Substance abuse remains a serious threat to our nation's public health, security, and development. As we all know, Nigeria faces a growing problem of drug addiction, particularly among teenagers. The 2018 National Drug Use Survey revealed that the drug use prevalence rate in Nigeria is significantly higher than the global average, with about 14.3 million Nigerians aged 15 to 64 years old using psychoactive substances. This translates into millions of families who are indirectly impacted by the adverse effects of substance use. Many of these families feel powerless, unable to support their loved ones in the face of addiction due to lack of resources, knowledge, or access to appropriate care. This scenario is not only worrying but calls for urgent and sustained action from all sectors of society.

As a National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), our primary responsibility is to enforce laws aimed at combating the production, trafficking, and abuse of narcotic substances. Over the past year, the NDLEA has intensified its operations, and I am proud to report that we have recorded several significant successes in our fight against drug trafficking and abuse. However, enforcement alone is not enough. The NDLEA recognises that a holistic approach is necessary to effectively combat the drug menace. This is where organisations like ISSUP Nigeria, healthcare professionals, social workers, and civil society play a critical role.

This year's theme, "Strengthening Family Support Systems for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery," is both timely and essential. In our collective efforts to combat the scourge of drug abuse, we often focus on law enforcement, treatment, and rehabilitation. However, we must not overlook the critical role that families play in preventing and responding to substance use disorders. The family unit, after all, is the foundation of our society and serves as the first line of defence against the threats of substance use.

Substance use does not only affect the individual but ripples through the entire family, whether it is a child, sibling, or parent battling addiction. The emotional, psychological, and financial strain on the family can be overwhelming. Families often suffer in silence, facing stigma and shame while struggling to find effective solutions to help their loved ones. The family plays a pivotal role in shaping the behaviour and choices of its members, particularly children and adolescents. Research has shown that strong family bonds, open communication, and parental guidance are some of the most effective tools in preventing substance abuse. Parents and caregivers are uniquely positioned to educate their children about the dangers of drug use, to set boundaries, and to model positive behaviours.

However, we recognise that in today's rapidly changing world, many families are struggling to provide support to their members. Economic pressures, social challenges, and a lack of awareness about substance use prevention can make the family struggle. Therefore, strengthening family support systems must be a key component of our strategy to address substance use in Nigeria.

As the NDLEA, we are committed to investing in prevention efforts that target the family unit. Over the past years, we have launched several initiatives designed to equip families with the tools they need to protect their children and loved ones from substance abuse. One such initiative is the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) campaign, which seeks to engage families and communities in drug prevention education and awareness. Through school-based programmes, community outreach, and media campaigns, we are working to empower parents, teachers, and community leaders with knowledge on how to identify early signs of drug use and intervene before it escalates into addiction.

Also, in June this year, during World Drug Day 2024, the NDLEA launched a drug testing initiative known as the Save Our Families initiative. Under this project, families are encouraged to adopt a drug testing approach for their children and wards for early detection of drug use and prompt intervention. Additionally, the NDLEA is partnering with religious institutions, civil society organisations, and traditional rulers to spread the message of drug prevention at the grassroots level.

This partnership helps to ensure that prevention messages reach every corner of society, including the families in rural and underserved areas. For individuals already struggling with substance use disorders, family support is a critical component of successful treatment and recovery. Addiction is a complex disease that requires comprehensive care, but with the encouragement and involvement of family members, the road to recovery becomes significantly smoother.

However, we also recognise that families themselves need support. Caring for a loved one battling addiction can be emotionally draining and, in some cases, traumatic. This is why the NDLEA is advocating for more family-centred treatment programmes that provide counselling and support services not only to the individual in recovery but also to their family members.

We must remove the stigma surrounding addiction and encourage families to seek help without fear of judgement. Ladies and gentlemen, strengthening family support systems requires a multidimensional approach, which involves providing families with education, resources, and tools necessary to understand substance use disorders and how to address them effectively. As we gather here today, I call on all stakeholders, government agencies, healthcare providers,

social workers, community leaders, and faith-based organisations to commit to strengthening family support systems.

We must work together to provide families with the information, resources, and access to services they need to prevent, treat, and recover from substance use disorders.

Thank you all for listening.



REMARKS BY THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS (INL), NIGERIA OFFICE



Good morning, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. It's an honour to be part of the International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP) Nigeria 2024 Conference.

I wish to extend a special thanks to Dr. Martin Agwogie and his entire ISSUP Nigeria team for their consistent efforts in gathering professionals from around the world, working together to help mitigate the global substance use crisis. The United States government, through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, launched ISSUP is to form a global community of professionals from various disciplines, including healthcare workers, researchers, educators, and policymakers, to combine their skills in tackling the

rising global synthetic drug crisis. Synthetic drugs pose a significant threat to public health and safety, not only in the United States but also in Nigeria.

These substances, often more potent and dangerous than traditional drugs, have led to increased rates of addiction, overdose, and death. Currently, the United States has seen a dramatic rise in synthetic opioids like fentanyl. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), synthetic opioids were involved in 73% of all opioid-related overdose deaths in 2021.

In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has reported a surge in the abuse of synthetic drugs like Tramadol and methamphetamine, contributing to social and health challenges in the country. The accessibility and potency of these drugs have exacerbated the opioid crisis, leading to a public health emergency. The lack of robust regulatory frameworks and limited access to treatment facilities further complicate the situation. Therefore, implementing comprehensive drug education programmes in schools and communities, along with launching nationwide campaigns to educate people on the dangers and risks associated with synthetic drug use, is highly expedient. Additionally, enhancing legal frameworks to regulate the production, distribution, and sale of synthetic drugs, alongside advocating for community-based initiatives that provide resources and support to at-risk populations, will further help to tackle the global synthetic drug crisis.

The family unit is universally recognised as the cornerstone of every society. Hence, hinging the theme of the ISSUP Nigeria Conference 2024 focused on the family is critical, as family's involvement can significantly influence the success of an individual's recovery journey and even prevention. Substance use prevention begins at home, and recovery is a long-term process that requires ongoing support by creating a stable and supportive environment.

By leveraging the strength of the family unit, ISSUP can empower families with the right knowledge and resources they need to combat substance use and support their loved ones on the pathway to recovery. The threat posed by synthetic drugs in the United States and Nigeria is a pressing issue that requires a multifaceted approach. By implementing effective prevention strategies and providing comprehensive treatment options, both countries can mitigate the impacts of drugs and support individuals on the path to recovery.

The U.S. Embassy, through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), will continue to support collaborations with international organisations whose objectives are crucial in addressing this global challenge.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our continued collaboration in this vital area. Welcome once again, and thank you for your time.

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**REMARKS BY THE HEAD, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND DRUG CONTROL
DEPARTMENT AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION READ BY DR. ABEL BASUTU, AT
THE 6TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
ISSUP NIGERIA CHAPTER**



Mr. Abel BASUTU (PhD)
Senior Drug Control Programme Officer, African Union Commission

Excellencies, distinguished experts, ladies and gentlemen. Permit me to stand on existing protocol.

The 2023 reports of the Continental Drugs Surveillance Centennial, the African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use, paint a grim picture. These reports synthesize standardized data submitted by member states on illicit drug trafficking, use, and related trends in Africa to facilitate judicious review of legislative, policy, and operational strategies in mitigating drug demand and supply.

What we are seeing at the continental level is that African Union member states are experiencing an upsurge in public health problems, especially among youth, women, and children, due to increased availability and use of psychoactive substances. Significant findings from the report showed alcohol and cannabis as the primary substances of abuse among people seeking treatment in the majority of countries. The reports also highlight rising trafficking and consumption of stimulants like cocaine, opioids such as heroin and tramadol, particularly in West, Central, and North Africa, as well as codeine in cough syrups in Southern Africa. Additionally, the continent is witnessing a meteoric rise in new psychoactive substances, with a new threat caused by illicit manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs.

Age-disaggregated data show that about 70 percent of people who sought treatment for substance use disorders on the continent between 2019 and 2021 were aged 15 to 34 years, classified as youth according to the African Charter. 2.3 percent of individuals treated for substance use disorders during the period were aged 10 to 14 years. Alarming, children as young as nine years old are in treatment for substance use disorders, indicating early initiation of substance use. Substance use has also been reported in both urban and rural schools on the continent, and the most serious offenses dealt with by most school disciplinary boards involve drug use.

Families are powerful resources for enhancing substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery, and we are very pleased at the African Union that ISSUP Nigeria Chapter has chosen to focus on strengthening family support systems. Coincidentally, that's the focus area of the African Union Drug Control Secretariat in the coming year, along with strengthening community- and school-based prevention initiatives.

By investing in families, we are investing in the future of our society. Strengthening community empowerment, early prevention, strengthened family bonds, and prevention of child abuse and neglect are key. We assure ISSUP Nigeria Chapter of our full support and are on standby as the African Union for technical support, as may be required, as you implement some of the tenets of the Continental Drug Action Plan.

I thank you.

ISSUP Global Remarks, read by Radolf Nortey, Africa Regional Coordinator, at the 2024 ISSUP Nigeria Chapter Conference.

Hello, ISSUP Nigeria. Greetings from ISSUP Global!

We are excited to be part of your 2024 national conference, albeit virtually. Congratulations on another milestone. ISSUP Nigeria is one of the very few national chapters around the world that have consistently held local conferences like the one you are hosting at the moment. In fact, I think it is the only national chapter in Africa to hold such annual meetings. This is a great achievement and is in full alignment with the spirit of ISSUP—to unite and connect the workforce, whether at the local, regional, or global levels.



Radolf Nortey

Nigeria has a huge population, and to be able to draw participation from over 30 different states is commendable. We are really proud of your achievements as a national chapter.

ISSUP presently has about 40,000 members, and membership growth in Africa is increasing at a significant rate of 32 percent. I am glad and excited to say that ISSUP Nigeria is driving this growth in the region and around the world, with a total of 2,848 members to date. Day in and day out, more members keep joining the ISSUP Nigeria membership base.

Another highlight of your progress is your routine webinars—your bi-monthly webinars—which have been a significant achievement not only as a country but also in the region.

Since 2020, ISSUP Nigeria alone has organized 25 webinars, and the number keeps growing. Looking at the attendee information, we always notice a significant number of participants from across Africa. This is all because of the huge membership base in Nigeria. Over the years, statistics have shown that 11.4% of the total ISSUP webinar attendee population came from Nigeria.

I must also commend you for your quarterly newsletter. This is a significant achievement—to be able to put together all the information and present it in one newsletter to disseminate within your local workforce. ISSUP Nigeria is the only national chapter on the continent that has consistently produced such a newsletter, and this is indeed a feat worth emulating.

It is also worth mentioning a recent social media highlight where remarks from the Regional Africa Meeting in Tanzania were characterized as a high-performing video. The reach was over 6,000 members, and there was a lot of engagement on that video. We must applaud such participation from Nigeria, as it encourages you to continue putting out more on social media and in newsletters.

Thank you very much for your participation over the years. We wish you the very best in your conference today. Greetings from Joanna and Olivia, who have wished to be with you today but are caught up in other commitments at the moment.

Congratulations again, and all the best!

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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF PROF. FATOU SARR SOW, COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, ECOWAS COMMISSION, PRESENTED BY DR. DANIEL AMANKWAAH, HEAD OF THE ECOWAS DRUG PREVENTION AND CONTROL DIVISION

At the 2024 Annual Conference of the Nigerian Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP Nigeria Chapter), 16th October 2024, Lagos



Dr. Daniel Amankwaah

**Mr. Chairman,
Special Guest of Honour,
Board of Trustees and Executive
Council of ISSUP - Nigeria,
Distinguished ISSUP Members,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today as part of this year's ISSUP Annual Conference. I bring you greetings from the Honourable

Commissioner of Human Development and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission, Professor Fatou Sow Sarr, and my Director, Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, who, due to prior commitments, could not attend this meeting.

As many of you may be aware, drug abuse, illicit drug trafficking, and related crimes represent one of the most serious socio-economic and security challenges facing numerous countries, including our ECOWAS Member States. These issues

not only devastate societies but also pose a growing public health threat, as highlighted by the recently published West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (WENDU) Report of 2023. The report reveals a disturbing trend in substance abuse, indicating that the problem is evolving and expanding across the region.

A particularly alarming incident this year was the declaration of a state of emergency in one of our Member States in response to the widespread abuse of Kush. There have been disturbing reports linking the drug to gruesome rumors, including claims that it contains human bones. These rumors, though unverified, have contributed to widespread fear, and the consequences of Kush abuse have led to dire situations for many young people. The images of those affected are chilling, and the issue has escalated to a point where urgent action is needed.

The rise of Kush underscores a troubling aspect of the substance abuse crisis. While the abuse of traditional drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin persists, new psychoactive substances are constantly emerging, making it increasingly difficult to tackle the issue comprehensively. Just a few years ago, tramadol abuse emerged as a significant concern, and now we are dealing with Kush. Meanwhile, the abuse of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other psychotropic substances continues to affect communities. I had hoped that newer substances might replace older ones, but unfortunately, this is not the case, and we are left facing a more complex and evolving challenge.

However, despite these challenges, we cannot simply stand by and watch as our communities are destroyed. We must continue to strive for solutions and improve our collective response. In this regard, the ECOWAS Commission has stepped up its drug prevention and control efforts within Member States, particularly targeting the rise of new substances like Kush. The Commission will soon begin offering training in drug prevention and control in the countries hardest hit by this crisis. We look forward to collaborating with some of you, especially those of you who are UPC (Universal Prevention Curriculum) master trainers, to leverage your expertise.

Last year, during our meeting, I mentioned that access to drug data in West Africa was improving, particularly through the WENDU Report. I am pleased to inform you that the third WENDU Report (covering the period from 2020 to 2022) was launched and published as scheduled. Moreover, the ECOWAS Commission has now published the fourth WENDU Report, which you can access by searching for it online or visiting the ECOWAS website at www.ecowas.int. This report, along with the accompanying policy briefs, offers valuable insights and practical tools for guiding drug prevention and control initiatives in West Africa. I highly encourage you to review these documents.

It is heartening to note that ISSUP Nigeria continues to provide a critical platform for discussing and addressing drug-related issues in Nigeria. As we all know, the drug menace is dynamic and evolving, requiring ongoing dialogue and innovative strategies to effectively combat it. This year's focus on the role of the family in drug prevention and treatment is particularly relevant. Families play a crucial role not only in preventing and treating drug abuse but also in addressing issues such as drug trafficking and marijuana cultivation. I believe that this year's conference will make significant contributions to finding solutions to these complex problems.

On behalf of the ECOWAS Commission, I reaffirm our commitment to supporting our Member States and providing policy guidance to address the drug challenge in West Africa. Together, we can continue to make progress in tackling this ever-evolving issue.

I wish you all a very fruitful conference.
Thank you for your attention.



Cover Story

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: THE BEDROCK OF PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND RECOVERY

The 6th National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP) Nigeria Chapter took place on 16th October 2024, at the Lagos Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos. The event brought Nigeria's leading voices together to address substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery.

With the theme ***"Strengthening Family Support Systems for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery,"*** the conference underscored that the family remains the most critical institution for protecting individuals from the devastating effects of substance abuse.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: A BLUEPRINT FOR PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Ngozi Anthonia Madubuike, Deputy Commander General of Narcotics (DCGN) at the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). Drawing from her 30 years of experience in drug demand reduction, research, and policy development, Dr. Madubuike gave a masterclass on family-centred interventions and evidence-based strategies to combat substance use.

KEY POINTS HIGHLIGHTED:

- **The Importance of Family-Based Prevention:** Dr. Madubuike stressed that families are uniquely positioned to serve as the first line of defence, providing love, guidance, and supervision to prevent substance use experimentation among youth.
- **Holistic Treatment and Recovery Frameworks:** She outlined the need for integrated systems that include medical treatment, family counselling, and community reintegration programmes to ensure long-term recovery.
- **Evidence-Based Policy Advocacy:** Dr. Madubuike called for a stronger national policy framework to empower families and prevent drug use while ensuring recovery resources are accessible and affordable.

"Substance use prevention and recovery cannot happen in silos. We need empowered families, strong institutions, and community collaboration to drive change," she emphasised.

Dr. Madubuike further applauded the efforts of organisations like the ISSUP, NDLEA and local and international partners for their commitment to advancing substance use prevention.



Dr. Ngozi Madubuike



Mitchell Ofoyeju, Tincan Island Commander and DCN Chinyerem Eziaghighala Deputy Commander, DDR, NDLEA Lagos Strategic Command

RESEARCH CORNER: INSIGHTS THAT INSPIRE ACTION

The conference featured key research presentations that shed light on pressing issues surrounding substance use patterns, access, treatment gaps and actionable insights to shape policies, enhance family involvement, and address evolving trends in substance use.

A. ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ACCESS IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS



R-L: Dr. Martin Agwogie and Dr. Grace Scent

AUTHORS: Grace Atije Tonye Scent, Ph.D., Tonbra Robert Odubo, Ph.D., Mezewor Obuzor

FOCUS: Investigating substance access in the Yenagoa Correctional Center.

KEY FINDINGS:

Staff and visitor practices contribute to substance availability among inmates.

Common substances include cannabis, codeine, and cocaine, with inmates often using drugs to cope with trauma.

TAKEAWAY: Holistic policies, staff training, and community partnerships are critical to promoting recovery and minimizing substance access in high-risk settings.

B. CHANGING SUBSTANCE USE PATTERNS OVER A DECADE

AUTHORS: Dapap D. Datak, Amaku Chiemeze

FOCUS: Comparative study on substance use in 2013 vs. 2023 at a Nigerian rehabilitation center.

KEY FINDINGS:

Alcohol and stimulant use increased, while opioid use decreased.

Trends highlight the need for dynamic prevention strategies.

TAKEAWAY: Proactive measures must adapt to changing substance use patterns to effectively target emerging challenges.

C. OPIOID MISUSE: A GROWING CONCERN

AUTHORS: Dapap D. Datak, Tunchama Friday, Maigari Yusuf

FOCUS: Prescription opioid use and misuse among patients at a drug treatment center.

KEY FINDINGS:

43.5% of patients used prescription opioids; 27.3% misused them.

Most common reason for misuse: physical pain relief.

TAKEAWAY: Developing safer, non-addictive alternatives for pain management is imperative for reducing opioid misuse.

D. EMPOWERING RECOVERY THROUGH FAMILY SUPPORT

AUTHORS: Okoro S. I., Adeniji A. I., Koyejo O. M.

FOCUS: Mathematical modeling of family roles in substance use treatment.

KEY INSIGHTS:

Family involvement improves detection, rehabilitation success, and relapse prevention.

Strong family systems are critical to effective substance use recovery.

TAKEAWAY: Families must be equipped with resources and training to play an active role in recovery processes.

PANEL DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS:

The panel discussion brought together experts who explored how families and communities can collaborate to tackle substance use effectively. Panelists included:

- **Dr. Olugbenga Owuoye**, Medical Director, Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos.
- **Mr. Kelechi Nwachukwu**, Senior Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program Assistant, International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- **Mr. Ogedengbe Kayode Anthony**, Deputy Director, Medical Social Services, University College Hospital, Ibadan.
- **Professor Gboyega Abikoye**, moderator



Panel discussion team

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PANEL:

- **Early Detection:** Parents should be trained to identify early signs of substance use and respond with empathy and support.
- **Community Partnerships:** Schools, religious institutions, and NGOs must collaborate with families to deliver effective prevention programs.
- **Access to Treatment:** Policymakers must ensure that quality treatment services are affordable and stigma-free.
- **Positive Parenting:** Emotional bonding, trust, and open communication are key in preventing substance use.

“We must return to the fundamentals of parenting—love, trust, and presence. Prevention begins with the little things,” said Dr. Owoeye.

CELEBRATING CHAMPIONS OF PREVENTION

The conference honoured individuals and organisations for their outstanding contributions to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery:



Dr. Koyejo receiving an award from Dr. Martin Agwogie

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL): For unwavering support and partnership in advancing prevention efforts.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA): For leadership and dedication to national drug control initiatives.

Dr. Martin O. Agwogie: For his exemplary leadership as ISSUP Nigeria National President.

Dr. Olajumoke Koyejo: For impactful leadership in ISSUP South West Zone.

Voices from the Conference

Dr. Martin O. Agwogie: *"We need a collective commitment to break the cycle of substance abuse. Families, professionals, and policymakers must unite to safeguard our future."*

Dr. Grace Scent: *"Research provides us with the tools to identify gaps and create solutions. Evidence must drive our policies and programmes."*

COMMITMENTS AND CLOSING REMARKS: A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR CHANGE

As the conference drew to a close, ISSUP Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to:

- Strengthening family-based prevention initiatives across Nigeria.
- Promoting collaboration between families, schools, communities, and policymakers.
- Advocating for policies that prioritise treatment accessibility and eliminate stigma.
- Supporting ongoing research to drive evidence-based programmes.

"This conference is not just a gathering but a movement. It is a renewed call to action to protect our youth, heal families, and build communities where substance use has no place," said Dr. Agwogie in his closing remarks.

ISSUP Nigeria Chapter also announced plans for expanded capacity-building programmes, public education campaigns, and the development of family-centred recovery toolkits to support prevention efforts across the country.

FINAL NOTE: UNITED FOR A DRUG-FREE NIGERIA

The 6th ISSUP Nigeria National Conference was a powerful demonstration of what can be achieved when individuals, families, and institutions come together. As substance use continues to threaten the well-being of Nigerian youth, the solutions lie in collaboration, compassion, and action.

CELEBRATING OUR MEMBERS' RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS



***Dr, Ngozi Madubuike,
Deputy Commander General
of Narcotics (DCGN)***

Congratulations to Dr. Ngozi A. Madubuike, the Director Drug Demand Reduction, NDLEA on your promotion to the rank of Deputy Commander General of Narcotics (DCGN). Greater heights!



***Dr. Ngozichukwu N. Unaogu,
MD, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital Enugu***

Congratulations to Dr. Ngozichukwu N. Unaogu on your appointment as the Medical Director, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital Enugu. Greater heights!



Prof. Kingsley Mayowa Okonoda

Congratulations to Dr Kingsley Mayowa Okonoda on your appointment as Professor of Psychiatry by the University of Jos.
Greater heights!



***The Abia state coordinator,
Dr. Azu Oko, second left with his ISSUP team at the
inauguration***

Congratulations to Dr. Azu Oko and the members of the Abia State Drug Control Committee on their swearing-in at the Government House, Umuahia. The inclusion of ISSUP Abia state branch in the committee is a positive step towards addressing drug-related issues in the state. We are confident that your efforts will significantly contribute to promoting drug demand reduction in Abia State. Wishing you great success in this important endeavor!



***Group Photograph with the
Executive Governor of Abia state
His Excellency
Dr. Alex C. Otti, OFR
at the inauguration***

APPRECIATION MESSAGE

On behalf of the entire team at Solace Newsletter, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the President and the Executive Committee of ISSUP Nigeria for your leadership and commitment to advancing substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery. Your efforts in uniting professionals and stakeholders have fostered valuable collaboration.



We also thank the Local Organizing Committee for your exceptional efforts in ensuring the success of the 6th ISSUP Nigeria National Conference. Your hard work and attention to detail were key to making the event a success.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration in the future.

With sincere appreciation,
The Solace Newsletter Team

At Solace Newsletter, we celebrate these efforts and echo the call for every stakeholder—families, governments, communities, and professionals—to unite in building a drug-free Nigeria.

For updates and resources, visit: www.issup.net

Solace Newsletter: Promoting awareness, prevention, and recovery for a drug-free Nigeria.

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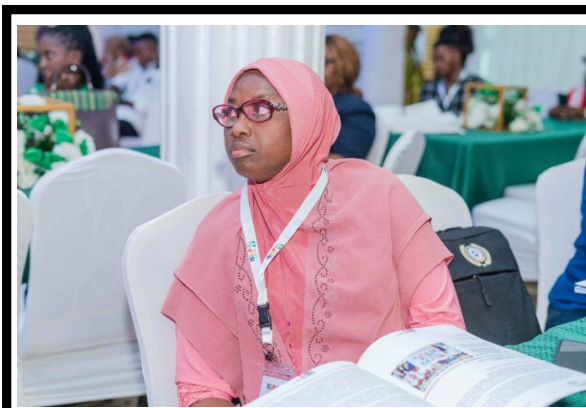


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